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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

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Statement

Transforming Values to Empower the Girl Child

The Bahá'í International Community welcomes the consideration of "the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" as the priority theme of the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We also welcome the Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children, which we hope will bring attention to this critical issue and facilitate strategizing at all levels of society.

The Bahá'í International Community believes that the era of developing legal frameworks to eradicate violence against girls must now be followed by an emphasis on implementation and prevention. The challenge before the international community is how to create the social, material and structural conditions in which women and girls can develop their full potential. The creation of such conditions must not be limited to legal and institutional reforms; rather, deep-rooted changes are needed to create a culture in which justice and equality prevail over the impetuousness of authoritarian power and physical force. Education and training must be carried out in a way that enables children to grow intellectually and morally, cultivating in them a sense of dignity as well as responsibility for the well-being of their family, their community and the world.

We would like to offer the following recommendations:

- With the understanding that a girl child's most influential environment is her family, national and international interventions, policies and programs should promote values and attitudes that support families and enable women and men to work together as equal partners in all fields of human endeavor.

- Educational institutions should develop and incorporate moral development into their curricula. Through such curricula, Bahá'í schools, for example, seek to develop the individual as a whole – integrating the spiritual and the material, the theoretical and the practical and the sense of individual progress with service to the common good. Gender sensitization should also form an integral part of a child's education, with a view to stemming the perpetuation of discrimination and stereotypical gender roles.

- Consultative mechanisms for coordination, implementation and monitoring at the national level are needed to reinforce the understanding of civil society's and governments' responsibility for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Bahá'í International Community and its affiliates in 182 countries, are striving to set a worldwide example of families which not only reject violence against the girl child, but also strive to provide a supportive and nurturing environment in which girls and women are valued and respected as equal partners.